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75th Anniversary
Churchman Funeral Service

James E. Churchman, Sr.
132 Clinton Avenue
Newark, N.J.
248-1672

75 years of dignified service to the
community

James E. Churchman, Jr.
345 13th Avenue
Newark, N.J.
242-8454

Edith Churchman
Public Relations
Mr. Hollingworth
May 17, 1973

In loving memory of the founder of
Churchman Funeral Service

James E. Churchman

Born March 3, 1874
Died April 23, 1917

(picture of James E. Churchman)

In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Churchman Funeral Service, I am updating a similar publication my grandfather wrote commemorating the 50th anniversary. This booklet is a history of Churchman Funeral Service, which was begun by my greatgrandfather.

On June 15, 1899 James E. Churchman hung a sign at 3 Bladwin Street East Orange, New Jersey. It read: "James E. Churchman and Co., Undertakers". Financial assistance from the late Mr. James N. Vankierball made it possible for this business to be opened.

As far as it can be determined, James Churchman was the first black funeral director to open business in the Oranges. The late Mr. Charles B. Dennis was the first black funeral director to open a business in the city of Newark.

After the establishment of the business, my greatgrandfather met Miss Minnie A. Brown of Memphis, Tennessee. They were married on December 6, 1899, and went to live on Parrow Street in Orange, New Jersey. It was here that my grandfather was born. At the time of his birth, he was named Joseph Lnoch, but upon the death of his father, he assumed the name James which he has used ever since.

hearse in front of J.E. Churchman's funeral home)

Soon after 1900, my greatgrandfather acquired three pieces of property on Oakwood Avenue in Orange, New Jersey. He made his home on one of these pieces of property which is now occupied by Mr. Macon T. Cotton and operated as a funeral home. It was on Oakwood Avenue that my great uncle James Wormly Grant Churchman (now of Los Angeles, California), and my great aunt Minnie Isabell Brown (of San Francisco, California) were born. Neither of them became interested in the business.

My greatgrandfather met with much success in his business. My grandfather recalls that his father was, "the first of his race to own a hearse and coaches in the days of horse drawn hearses."

My greatgrandfather was greatly interested in the welfare of his race, and became a lecturer and public speaker of some note. He was also interested in the ministry, and pastored several small AME churches before converting to the Baptist denomination. He was called to the pastorate of the second Baptist Church of Richmond Virginia upon the death of Rev. D. Webster Davis, who was a preacher of some re-known.

(picture of the business establishment of James E. Churchman, Jr.)

My greatgrandfather served his clientele conscientiously and diligently, putting service to the public above everything. At the time of his death on April 23, 1917 in his 43rd year, my greatgrandfather had conducted branch establishments in Newark New Jersey at the following locations: Plane Street near Orange Street, Halsey Street between Court and Marshall Streets, Sussex Avenue near Newark Street, and Bank Street next door to Bethany Baptist Church. He also had branches in Morristown and Plainfield New Jersey and Washington, D.C.

Associated with my greatgrandfather at various times were Mr. David D. Woody, Mr. George B. Kenton, Mr. Leonard C. Morse, Mr. James H. Beckett, and the late Mr. Thomas S. Goodwin.

(picture of Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Churchman, Jr.)

My grandfather enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1918, and was honorably discharged in 1919. Upon returning home, he found the business practically dormant. Due to the fact that he was a minor, he was unable to obtain a license as a funeral director. Through the friendship of Mr. Leonard C. Morse who had obtained a license at the time of my greatgrandfather's death, my grandfather was able to engage in business at 23 South Centre Street and 76 South Centre Street in Orange New Jersey. Later Mr. O.P. Burt, who had been a friend of my great grandfather, gave my grandfather the protection of his license. Others who helped my grandfather during this time were the late Mr. Andrew Brown and Mr. John E. White.

My grandfather married Miss Gladys St. John of Connecticut, and a son James E. Churchman Jr. was born. It was at this time that my grandfather located his business at 120 Barclay Street in Newark New Jersey. Later expansion of the business necessitated moving to 113 Barclay Street, then to 65 Barclay Street and later to 19 Rose Street, all in Newark.

(picture of Mrs. Gladys E. Churchman
mother of James E. Churchman, Jr.)

My grandfather later moved to 517 Washington Street where he married his present wife Miss Hazel P. Mitchell of Eufaula, Alabama. My grandfather's business was subsequently located several places within Newark, and is now located at 132 Clinton Avenue in Newark.

The loyalty of the late Mr. Thomas Scott Goodwin to my grandfather will never be forgotten. Also helpful to my grandfather have been the late Mr. John K. Carter, Albert Spence and Frank E. Davis, Kenneth E. White and Mr. Edwin Joshua.

Frank L. Murray acted as manager for a branch establishment that was located at 148 Central Place in Orange New Jersey. It was with my grandfather that Charles L. Whigham, presently a funeral director in Newark, received his first knowledge and experience.

(picture of the business establishment of
James E. Churchman, Sr.)

In 1949, my father received his funeral directors and embalming licenses from the McAllister School of Mortuary Science in New York. Later that year, he married my mother, Miss E. Corinne Johnston of Paterson New Jersey. To this union were born Edith in 1951 and James III in 1954.

In 1952 my father opened a funeral home at 397 Bergen Street, Newark, where he remained for nineteen years. Because of limited facilities, it was decided that we would move our place of business. We then opened in October of 1971 at our current location--345 13th Avenue, Newark. There we have been able to continue our service to the greater Newark community in a larger and more convenient locale.

I would be remiss not to mention two of the many dedicated people who have made our business function well: Mrs. Harriet Pierce and Mr. Burnett Davis.

(picture of Hazel Churchman)

My brother James III is currently serving his apprenticeship with my father during the summer months. He expects to attend a school of mortuary science and work with my father.

I will receive a degree in mortuary science from New England Institute, and will serve my apprenticeship with my father when my brother has completed his.

My brother and I hope to be able to continue with the business that our great grandfather began seventy-five years ago. Not only is this a family business, it is a tradition. We will strive to uphold the same standards of excellence, dedication and service that have made our business one that has lasted for four generations.

(separate pictures of James Churchman, James Churchman Sr., and James Churchman Jr.)